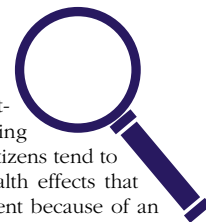


# DEQ's "Community/Industry Relations" Section Finds Solutions



**Jim Friloux, Community/Industry Relations director, speaks to the Norco/New Sarpy Community/Industry Panel about future meetings for the group.**

business is directly affecting their lives by being located nearby. These citizens tend to be afraid of negative health effects that they presume to be present because of an industry's relative location. CIR will step into a situation when there is a need to establish a dialogue between two or more parties.

If the parties agree to talk, CIR establishes a Community/Industry Panel to get the discussion moving forward. The Norco/New Sarpy Community/Industry Panel is one of the current panels that has been very successful.

The small communities of Norco and New Sarpy are located on the east bank of the Mississippi River approximately 20 miles to the north of New Orleans. The two cities are nestled in the middle of several large industries. One of the large companies is a chemical plant and two others are oil refineries. The companies have been there for over 60 years and the communities moved in next to them. These towns are what some call "company towns," meaning that their existence sprang from area industry.

The CIR section creates a panel by first talking to the parties involved. After establishing the main concerns, DEQ hires an outside, objective facilitator to run the meetings. One of the first topics addressed by a panel is evacuation routes. The companies usually have pre-existing evacuation routes, but quite often, the communities are unaware of them. Another question asked by almost every community that resides next to industry concerns health effects. Citizens want to know if the plants are

**D**EQ's Community/Industry Relations (CIR) section works to ease tensions between citizens and industry in Louisiana. In recent years, concerns associated with living next to large industries have heightened, but the CIR group is helping to find solutions so that all parties can live together.

"Our role is to see that both sides are treated fairly, the citizens as well as the industries," says Jim Friloux, CIR director and Ombudsman for DEQ. CIR is designed to respond to complaints from residents who believe that

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## Environmental Clubs Help Schools

**T**he Community/Industry Relations (CIR) section started an environmental club pilot program for middle and elementary schools in July of 2000. Admon McCastle, creator and contact for the clubs, says, "The mission of the program is to encourage and educate children on the importance of protecting the environment through hands-on and classroom activities."

The program exists in four schools (Merrydale Elementary, Park Elementary, Crestworth Middle, and Baker Middle) in the Baton Rouge area. Each club meets once a month to discuss environmental projects to work on between meetings. Typical projects include litter reduction, graffiti removal, facility painting and maintenance, lawn care, wildlife protection and sustenance, numerous recycling efforts and peer education. DEQ provides a helping hand at each meeting by supplying the children with a hands-on activity that is complementary to the topics being taught in their science classes.

In 2001, CIR plans to set up environmental clubs in area high schools while continuing to work with the elementary and middle schools. McCastle says, "Hopefully it will encourage children to go into environmental science."

For more information about school environmental clubs, please call Admon McCastle @ 765-0917 or Calvin Fair @ 765-0916.



**Admon McCastle, Administrative Specialist in the Community/Industry Relations section, talks to children from the Crestworth Middle School environmental club during a field trip to the Exxon Mobil Polyolefins Plant in Baton Rouge.**